

a seizure. Despite dozens of drug trials, special diets, and experimental therapies, Lauren suffered as many as 25 seizures a day. In between them, she would cry, "Mommy, make it stop!"

While some of Lauren's cognitive skills were nearly on target, she lagged in abstract thinking and interpersonal skills. Her childhood was nearly friendless. The drugs Lauren took made her by turns hyperactive, listless, irritable, dazed, even physically aggressive. "We hardly knew who she was," Susan says. When she acted out in public, the family felt the judgment of onlookers. "Sometimes," Susan says, "I wished I could put a sign on her back that said: 'Epilepsy. Heavily Medicated'"

At 17, Lauren underwent what her mother describes as "a horrific surgical procedure." Holes were drilled in her skull, electrodes implanted, and seizures provoked in an attempt to isolate their location in the brain. It was a failure. "We brought home a 17-year-old girl who had been shaved and scalped, drilled, put on steroids, and given two black eyes," Susan says quietly. "We put her through hell without result. I wept for 24 hours."

The failure of surgery proved another turning point for Susan. "Finally, I thought, 'Well, I can cry forever, or I can try to make a change.'"

Susan began to meet other parents living through similar hells. They agreed that no federal agency or private foundation was acting with the sense of urgency they felt, leaving 3 million American families to suffer in near-silence. In 1998, Susan and a few other mothers founded a nonprofit organization to increase public awareness of the realities of epilepsy and to raise money for research. They named it after the one thing no one offered them: CURE—Citizens United for Research in Epilepsy.

"Epilepsy is not benign and far too often is not treatable," Susan says. "We wanted the public to be aware of the death and destruction. We wanted the brightest minds to engage with the search for a cure."

Then-First Lady Hillary Clinton signed on to help; so did other politicians and celebrities. Later, veterans back from Iraq with seizures caused by traumatic brain injuries demanded answers, too. In its first decade, CURE raised \$9 million, funded about 75 research projects, and inspired a change in the scientific dialogue about epilepsy.

"CURE evolved from a small group of concerned parents into a major force in our research and clinical communities," says Dr. Frances E. Jensen, a professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School. "It becomes more and more evident that it won't be just the doctors, researchers, and scientists pushing the field forward. There's an active role for parents and patients. They tell us when the drugs aren't working."

The future holds promise for unlocking the mysteries of what some experts now call Epilepsy Spectrum Disorder. "Basic neuroscience, electrophysiological studies, gene studies, and new brain-imaging technologies are generating a huge body of knowledge," Dr. Jensen says.

Lauren Axelrod, now 27, is cute and petite, with short black hair and her mother's pale eyes. She speaks slowly, with evident impairment but a strong Chicago accent. "Things would be better for me if I wouldn't have seizures," she says. "They make me have problems with reading and math. They make me hard with everything."

By 2000, the savagery and relentlessness of Lauren's seizures seemed unstoppable. "I thought we were about to lose her," Susan says. "Her doctor said, 'I don't know what else we can do.'" Then, through CURE, Susan learned of a new anti-convulsant drug

called Keppra and obtained a sample. "The first day we started her on the medication," Susan says, "her seizures subsided. It's been almost nine years, and she hasn't had a seizure since. It won't work for everyone, but it has been a magic bullet for Lauren. She is blooming."

Susan and David see their daughter regaining some lost ground: social intuition, emotional responses, humor. "It's like little areas of her brain are waking up," Susan says. "She never has a harsh word for anyone, though she did think the Presidential campaign went on a little too long. The Thanksgiving before last, she asked David, 'When is this running-for-President thing going to be finished?'"

CURE is run by parents. Susan has worked for more than a decade without pay, pushing back at the monster robbing Lauren of a normal life. "Nothing can match the anguish of the mom of a chronically ill child," David says, "but Susan turned that anguish into action. She's devoted her life to saving other kids and families from the pain Lauren and our family have known. What she's done is amazing."

"Complete seizure freedom without side effects is what we want," Susan says. "It's too late for us, so we've committed ourselves to the hope that we can protect future generations from having their lives defined and devastated by this disorder."

TRIBUTE TO DR. MONA BETHEL JACKSON

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 5, 2009

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to Dr. Mona Bethel Jackson on the occasion of her retirement from the Miami-Dade County Public School System (MDCPS) with nearly 39 years of service and dedication.

Dr. Jackson, a native Miamian, was born to Charles Edward Bethel and Olga Goodman Bethel Williams. After graduating from George Washington Carver High School, she furthered her education at Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University. She then obtained her master's degree in guidance and counseling from Florida Atlantic University and her doctorate in educational administration and supervision from Florida International University. She also attended Principal Institutes at Fordham University and Harvard University, and was the first African-American woman to serve as president of the Florida Counseling Association.

She began her professional career as a science teacher at Charles R. Drew Junior High School. She served as principal of Richmond Heights Middle School for the past 11 years and is currently serving as mentor principal at Miami Edison Senior High School. Moreover, she is also the first African-American to serve as principal of Redland Middle School. She previously served as lead principal of Miami Southridge Senior High School feeder pattern. In 1999, Richmond Heights Middle School was named a semifinalist for the National Alliance of Black School Educators Award. The school earned a grade of B in 2006 and A in 2008 on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). It is quite clear that Dr. Jackson has been successful at meeting the challenge of educating the needs of her community's young people.

Additionally, Dr. Jackson complimented her educational achievements with her involvement in various organizations such as Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's National, Collegiate and Alumnae Chapters; Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated; Haitian Refugee Center Board of Directors; Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, Incorporated, Dade County Chapter; National Council of Jewish Women's Teen Violence Intervention Program Board and life member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Council of Negro Women; and Red Hat Society. In her spare time, she enjoys reading and organizing activities.

This public servant is married to Herman Jackson, and has two children, Keane Sean (Kelsey) and Herman, II (Cassie), and five grandchildren. She has been a diligent and dedicated member at Christ Episcopal Church where she currently serves as a teller and president of the Episcopal Church Women.

Madam Speaker, it is an honor to have the privilege of honoring Dr. Jackson, a valued educator of the Miami-Dade County community and beyond. She can look back on a proud career of service and distinction in education and community leadership. Now, in retirement, she embarks upon new challenges in life and I am certain her legacy of greatness will only grow and develop as she enters this new phase of life. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing Dr. Mona Bethel Jackson every happiness and many years of continued success.

TRIBUTE TO RETIRING MISSOURI ADJUTANT GENERAL KING SIDWELL

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 5, 2009

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, let me take this moment to recognize the career of Missouri Adjutant General King E. Sidwell. General Sidwell retired in late February after serving four years as Adjutant General of the Missouri National Guard.

General Sidwell was born in Sikeston, Missouri, on July 13, 1950. He resides with his wife Cindy Sidwell in Sikeston. They have two sons, William Mitchell Sidwell II and Trent Easterby Sidwell.

In 1972, General Sidwell earned his Bachelor of Science degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology. In 1975, he received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Missouri-Columbia and, in 2000, he received a Military and Strategic Studies degree from the United States Army War College.

General Sidwell has served in the military since 1972. He was commissioned as an officer in 1974 through the State Officer Candidate School at the Missouri Military Academy. Prior to his serving as Adjutant General, Sidwell served in many assignments of increasing responsibility, culminating with his command of the Engineer Brigade, 35th Infantry Division. Upon completion of this command, he assumed the position of Assistant Corps Engineer, 35th Engineer Brigade until being transferred to the Retired Reserve. It was from the Retired Reserve that Sidwell was appointed to the position of Adjutant General.